GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2420
ANSWERED ON:11.03.2016
Inter-Operability on Set Top Boxes
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Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is working on introducing inter-operability on set top boxes which allow television watchers to change their DTH or cable TV service providers without changing the set top box, if so, the details and objectives thereof;

(b) whether cable television providers and direct to home players have expressed doubts about the technical viability of such a system;

(c) if so, the details thereof and the response of the Government thereto;

(d) whether the Government had earlier introduced commercial inter-operability for STBs, if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the time by which a decision is likely to be taken in the matter?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING {COL RAJYAVARDHAN RATHORE (Retd.)}
(a) to (c): The issue of technical inter-operability of Set top Boxes is under the purview of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), the regulator in the field. The objective of STB inter-operability is to make available STBs in open market, which will provide an exit option to the consumers who want to change their service providers due to some reasons or the other. This is expected to facilitate competition and improve quality of services offered to the consumers. TRAI has informed that some of the service providers have raised their concerns about feasibility of technical interoperability due to various technical and commercial reasons, and it is in a consultative process to understand their concerns before arriving at a solution.

(d) & (e): The regulatory framework of TRAI mandates the commercial interoperability by prescribing that the STBs/Customer Premises Equipments (CPE) to be provided on outright purchase basis, hire purchase basis and rental basis. TRAI has also notified Tariff orders for Digital Addressable Cable TV Systems which prescribes a standard tariff package for offering of STBs to the subscribers. This tariff order provides an easy exit option to the subscribers, ensures availability of STBs at reasonable price and, at the same time, protects the interest of the service providers. Similarly for DTH services, TRAI has prescribed a tariff order which prescribes certain restrictions on the DTH operators offering schemes of Customer Premises Equipment. The applicable tariff order for DTH services namely the Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services (Seventh) (the Direct to Home Services) Tariff Order, 2015 (2 of 2015) dated 01.04.2015 is sub - judice.
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